



# MANUAL MATERIAL HANDLING TECHNIQUES FOR EMPLOYEES



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GUIDANCE

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Introduction

The Workers’ Compensation Management Bureau, within the Department of Administration, developed this guidance to assist State agencies in educating employees on the importance of correct lifting, moving and handling of any materials within the workplace. This guidance shows employees lifting techniques that they can apply in the workplace to decrease the chances of an injury.

What is Manual Material Handling?

The term manual material handling covers a wide variety of activities including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling and carrying. It is the process of moving or handling objects through a series of biomechanical functions.

Why educate employees on manual material handling?

The past 5 years, state agencies have had over 600 employees injured while handling materials. Injuries range from sprains and strains to dislocations and broken bones. Manual material handling injuries can have serious implications for the person who has been injured. They can occur almost anywhere in the workplace including in the office.

What should I do?

The techniques mentioned below should be applied while handling materials in the workplace. It is not always possible to apply these techniques; they are a guide not a rule. If you are unable to apply these techniques get help, use other aids such as hand carts or lifting equipment, or take more than one trip. Remember, you may be able to eliminate lifting altogether. Speak to your safety representative for assistance if needed.

Always remember to bend your knees and let your legs do the lifting, not your back.

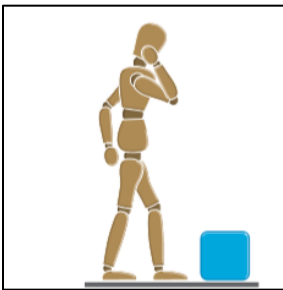
Before any lifting activity consider:

- **individual ability** – if you need help ask.
- **the nature of the load** – is it an awkward shape or a little too heavy. Slide the item first to determine its weight.
- **environmental conditions** – is there adequate lighting, pathway clear, the floor conditions, stairs?
- **training** – lifting techniques to decrease the chance of an injury. Practical demonstrations.
- **work organization** – can we do this task or process a different way to avoid lifting?

## Manual Lifting Techniques

There are some simple things to do before, during and after the lift or carry.

### 1. Think about and make a plan before lifting or handling.



Where are you taking the load from and too? Will you need help? Will there be obstructions along the way? Will you need to turn lights on and off, open and close doors? Will you need to stop during the move? Should you make 2 or 3 trips?

### 2. Adopt a stable position.

Your feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground). Be prepared to move with your feet during the lift to maintain stability. Do Not twist your back while lifting or moving with the load.



### 3. Get a good hold.

Where possible, the load should be hugged as close as possible to your body.

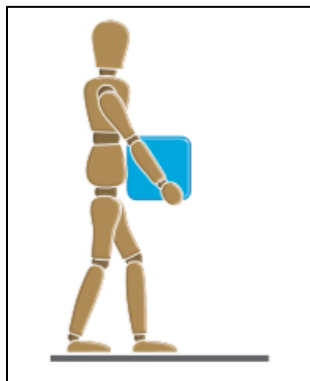


### 4. Start in a good posture.

At the start of the lift, keep your hips and knees squared to the load. Don't flex your back any further while lifting. Keep your head and chin up and do not look down at the load when lifting/standing up.

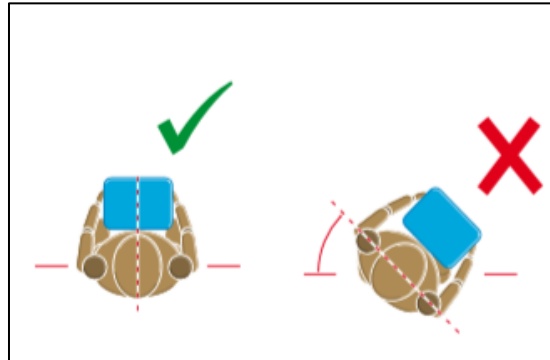
### 5. Keep the load close to your waist

Keep the load close to your body while lifting and carrying the load.



## 6. Avoid twisting your back or leaning sideways

Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as your hips. Turn by moving your feet in the direction you are going. Again, Do Not twist at your waist.



## 7. Keep your head up when handling.

Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely.

## 8. Move smoothly.

The load should not be jerked as you lift. Stay in control of your body while moving watching where you are going.

## 9. Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed.

There is a difference between what a person can lift and what they can lift safely. If in doubt, ask for advice or help.

## 10. Put down, then adjust.

If repositioning of the load is necessary, place it down preferably on table to prevent lifting from the floor again. Then slide it into the desired position, lift and continue with your carry.

